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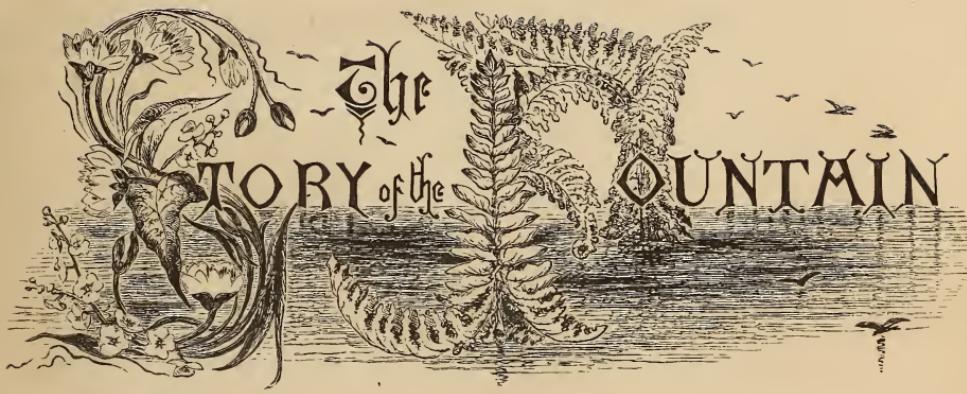
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1872











THE

# STORY OF THE FOUNTAIN.

BY

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.  
11

Illustrated with Forty-two Engravings on Wood.



NEW YORK:  
D. APPLETON & COMPANY  
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1872

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“— the maple burst into a flush Of scarlet flowers.”	Hows.	<i>Harley.</i>	15
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## THE STORY OF THE FOUNTAIN.



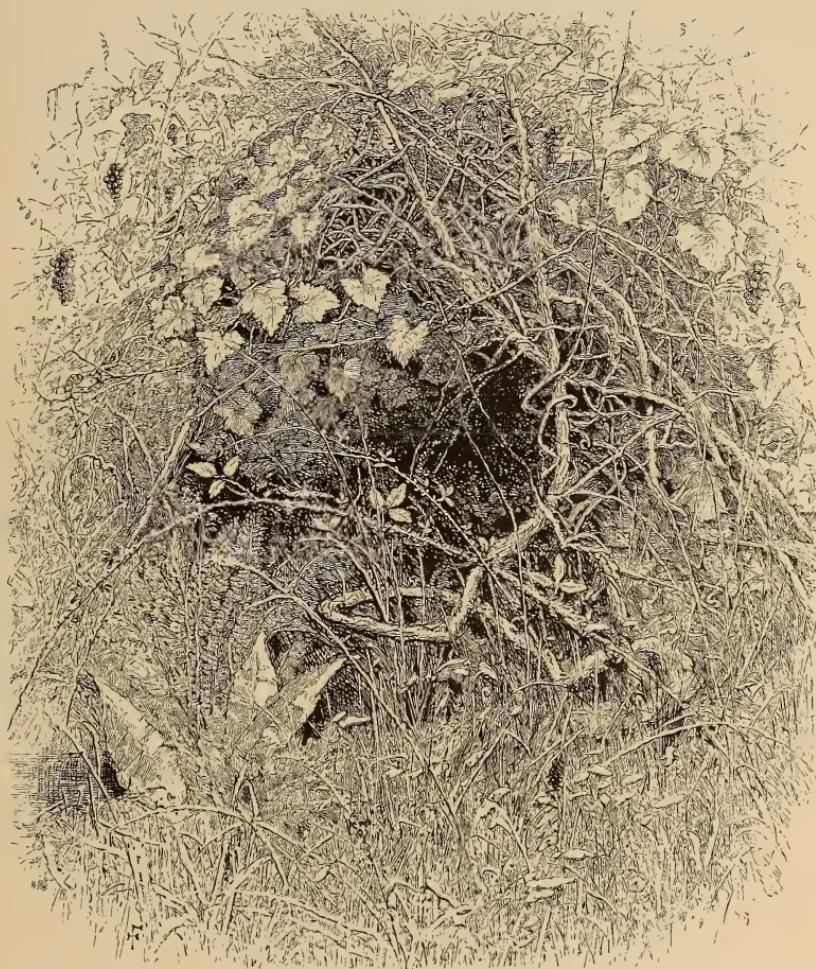
FOUNTAIN, that springest on this grassy slope,  
Thy quick cool murmur mingles pleasantly,  
With the cool sound of breezes in the beech,  
Above me in the noontide.



Thou dost wear  
No stain of thy dark birthplace ; gushing up  
From the red mould and slimy roots of earth,  
Thou flashest in the sun. The mountain-air,  
In winter, is not clearer, nor the dew  
That shines on mountain-blossom. Thus doth God  
Bring, from the dark and foul, the pure and bright.







This tangled thicket on the bank above  
Thy basin, how thy waters keep it green !  
For thou dost feed the roots of the wild vine  
That trails all over it, and to the twigs  
Ties fast her clusters.



There the spice-bush lifts  
Her leafy lances; the viburnum there,  
Paler of foliage, to the sun holds up  
Her circlet of green berries.







In and out  
The chipping sparrow, in her coat of brown,  
Steals silently, lest I should mark her nest.



Not such thou wert of yore, ere yet the axe  
Had smitten the old woods. Then hoary trunks  
Of oak, and plane, and hickory, o'er thee held  
A mighty canopy. When April winds







Grew soft, the maple burst into a flush  
Of scarlet flowers.



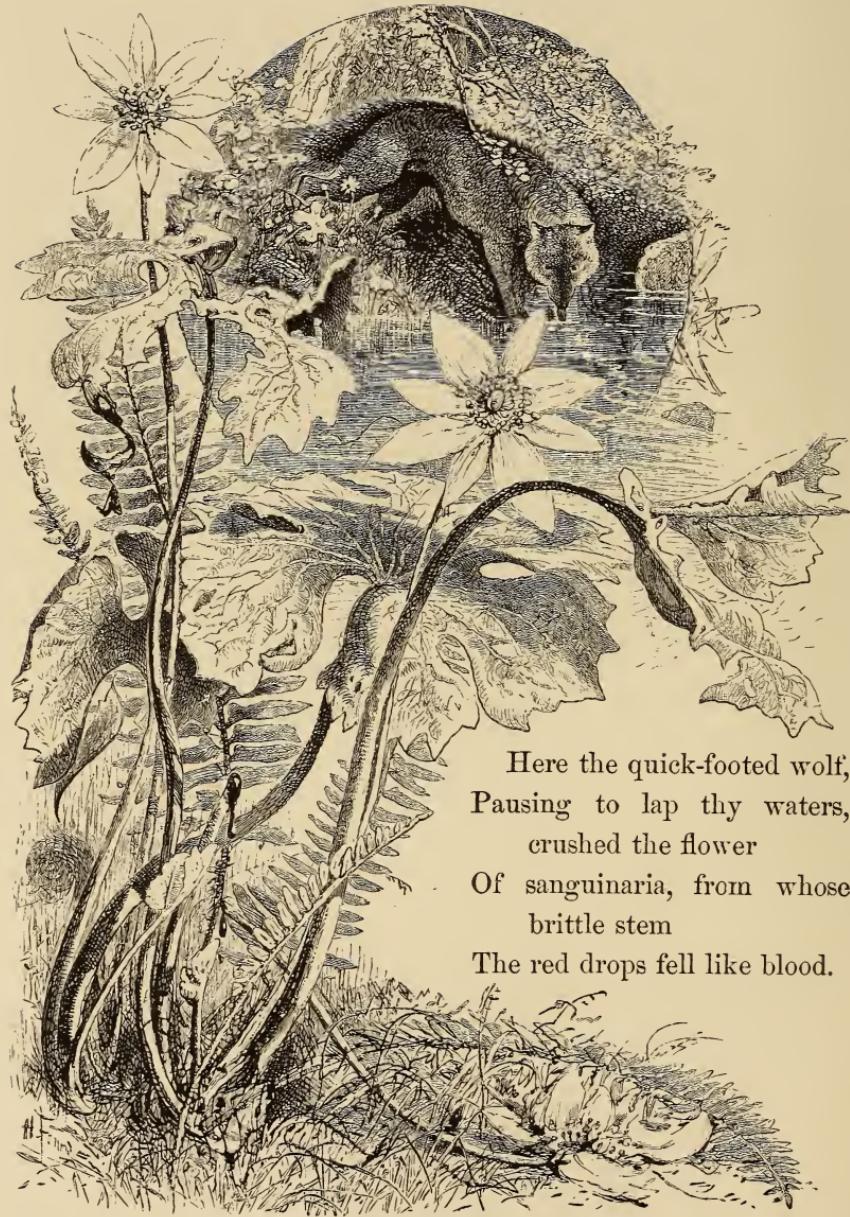
The tulip-tree, high up,  
Opened, in airs of June, her multitude  
Of golden chalices to humming-birds  
And silken-winged insects of the sky.







Frail wood-plants clustered round thy edge in Spring.  
The liver-leaf put forth her sister blooms  
Of faintest blue.



Here the quick-footed wolf,  
Pausing to lap thy waters,  
crushed the flower  
Of sanguinaria, from whose  
brittle stem  
The red drops fell like blood.







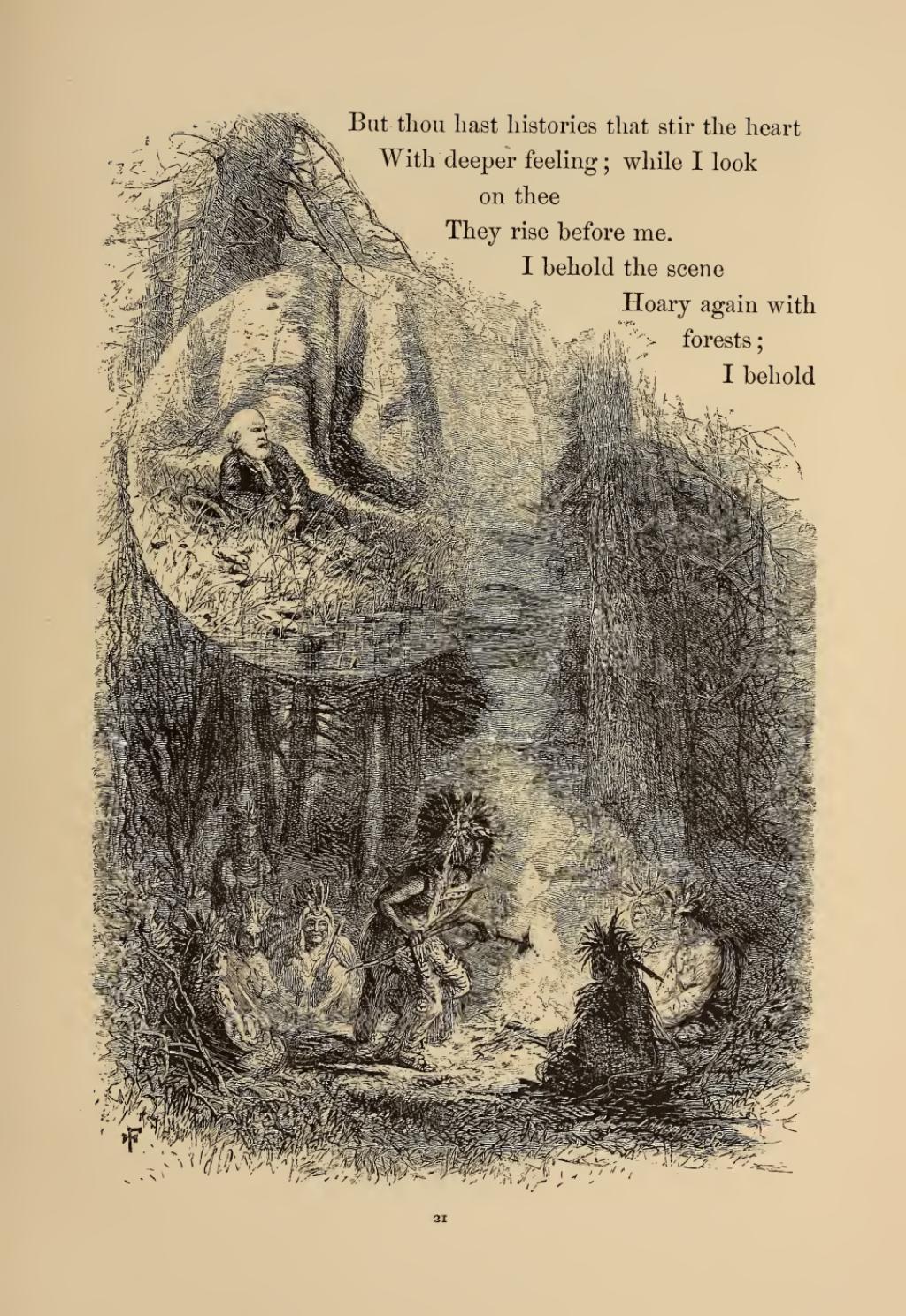
The deer, too, left  
Her delicate footprint in the soft moist mould,  
And on the fallen leaves.



The slow-paced bear,  
In such a sultry summer noon as this,  
Stopped at thy stream, and drank, and leaped across.





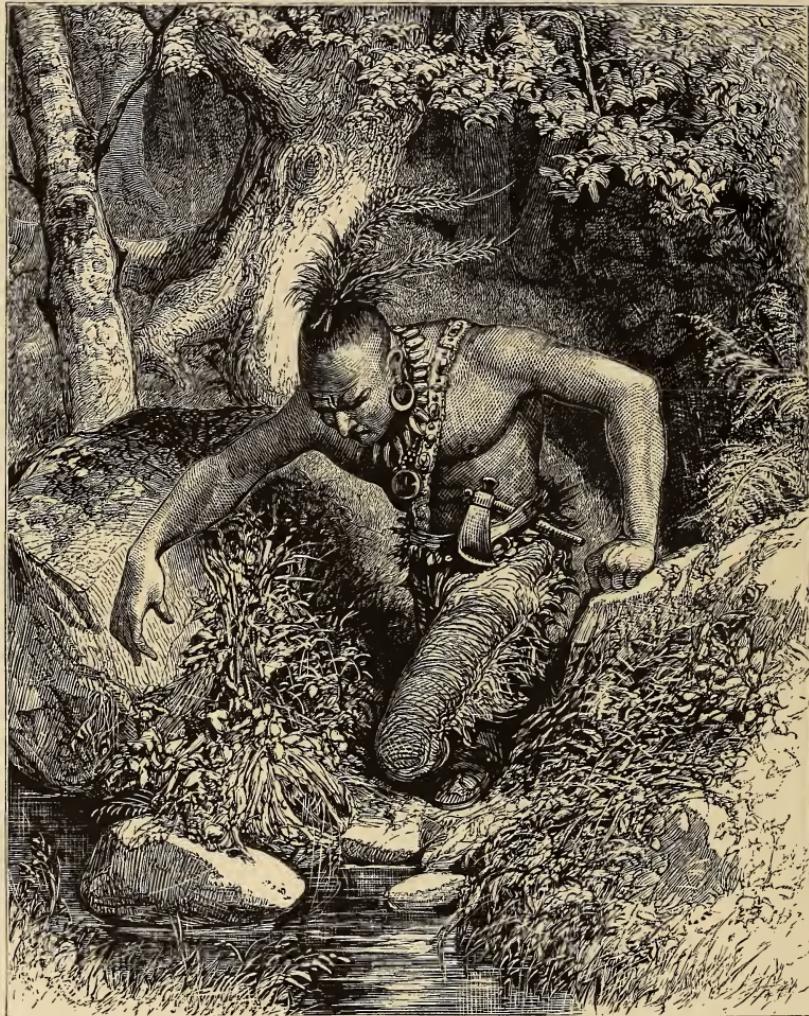


But thou hast histories that stir the heart  
With deeper feeling; while I look  
on thee  
They rise before me.

I behold the scene

Hoary again with  
forests;

I behold



The Indian warrior, whom a hand unseen  
Has smitten with his death-wound in the woods,  
Creep slowly to thy well-known rivulet,  
And slake his death-thirst. Hark, that quick fierce cry







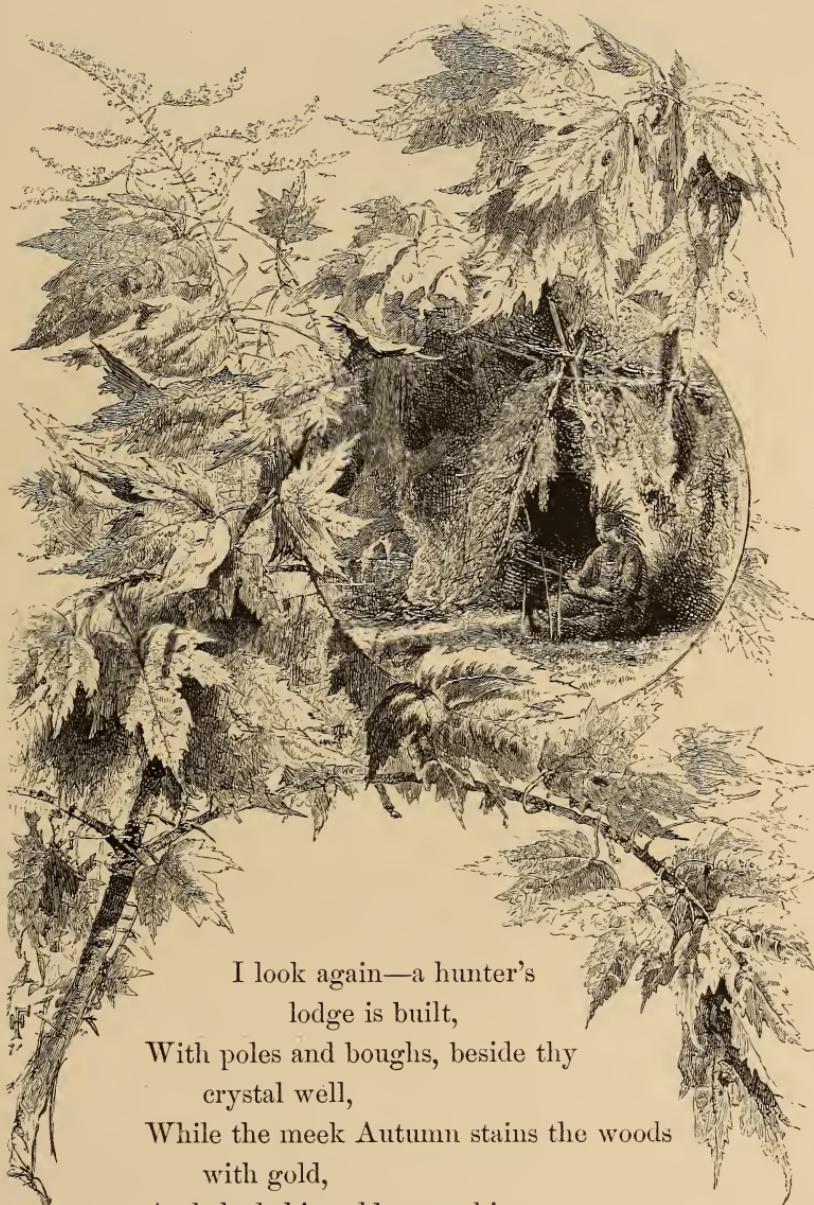
That rends the utter silence ; 'tis the whoop  
Of battle, and a throng of savage men  
With naked arms and faces stained like blood,  
Fill the green wilderness. The long bare arms



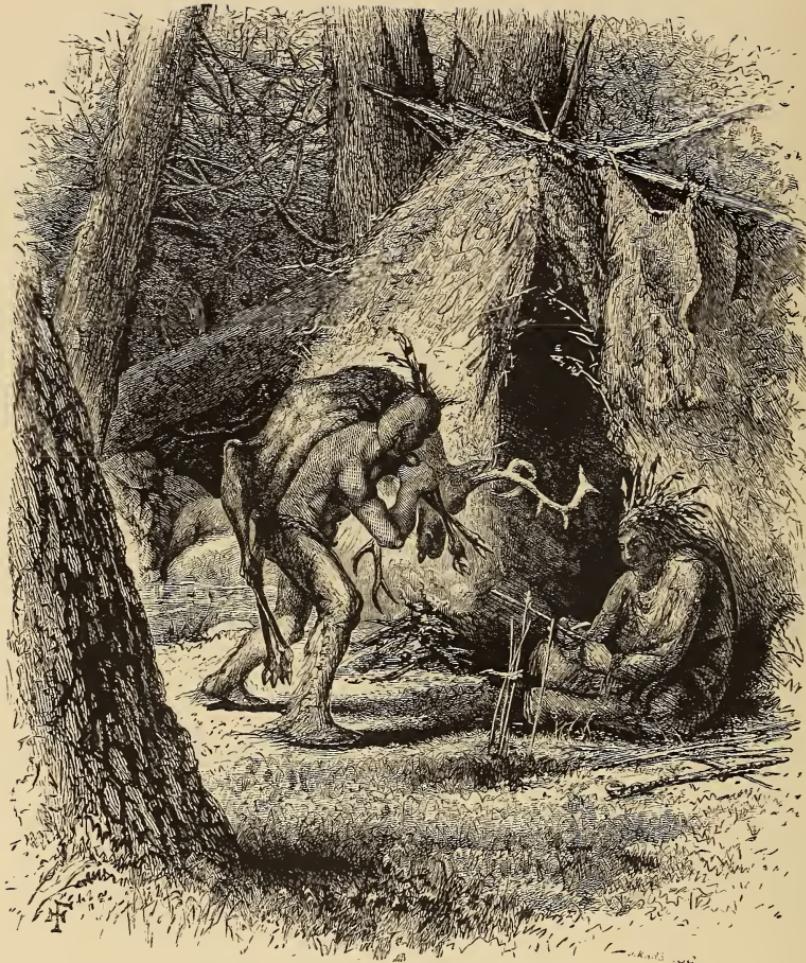
Then, as the sun goes down,  
Amid the deepening twilight I descry  
Figures of men that crouch and creep unheard,  
And bear away the dead. The next day's shower  
Shall wash the tokens of the fight away.







I look again—a hunter's  
lodge is built,  
With poles and boughs, beside thy  
crystal well,  
While the meek Autumn stains the woods  
with gold,  
And sheds his golden sunshine.



To the door

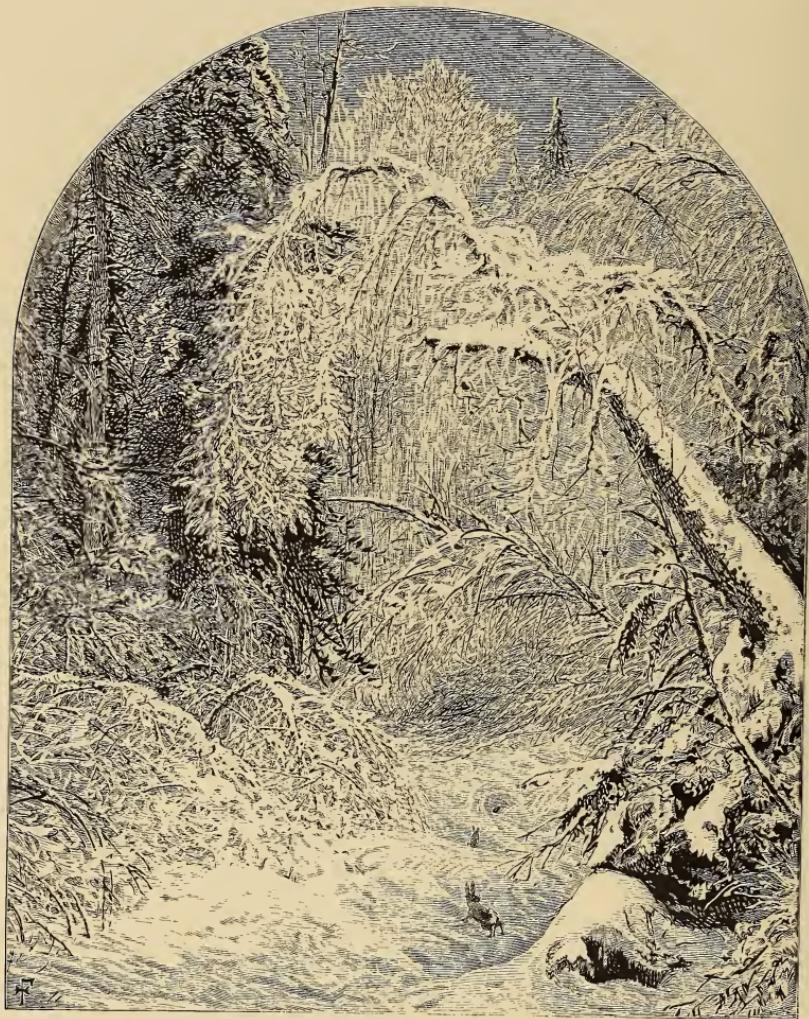
The red-man slowly drags the enormous bear  
Slain in the chestnut-thicket, or flings down  
The deer from his strong shoulders. Shaggy fells  
Of wolf and cougar hang upon the walls,







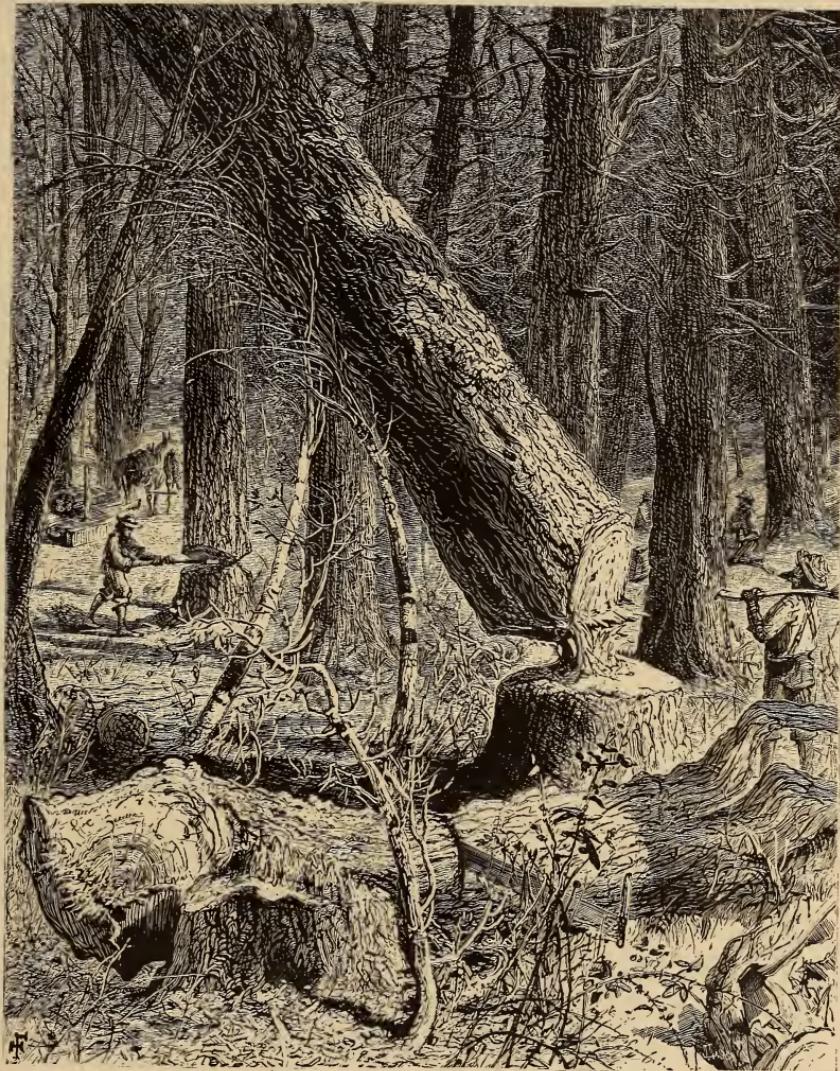
And loud the black-eyed Indian maidens laugh,  
That gather, from the rustling heaps of leaves,  
The hickory's white nuts, and the dark fruit  
That falls from the gray butternut's long boughs.



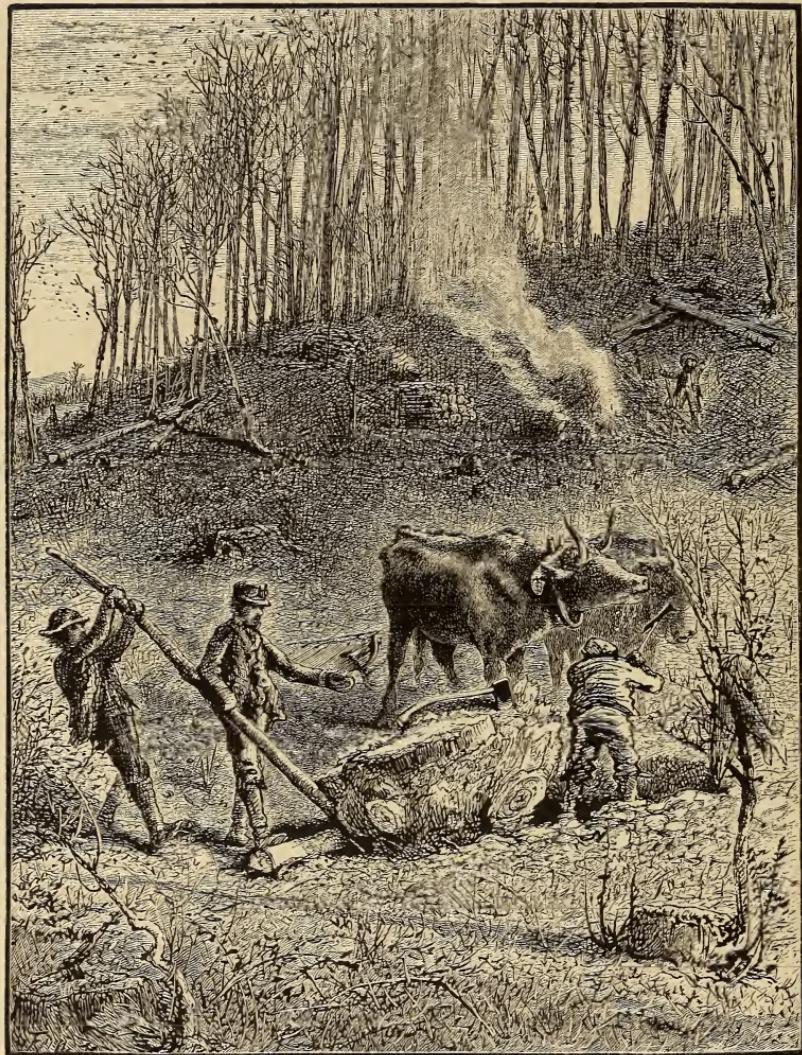
So centuries passed by, and still the woods  
Blossomed in spring, and reddened when the year  
Grew chill, and glistened in the frozen rains  
Of winter, till the white man swung the axe







Beside thee—signal of a mighty change.  
Then all around was heard the crash of trees,  
Trembling awhile and rushing to the ground,



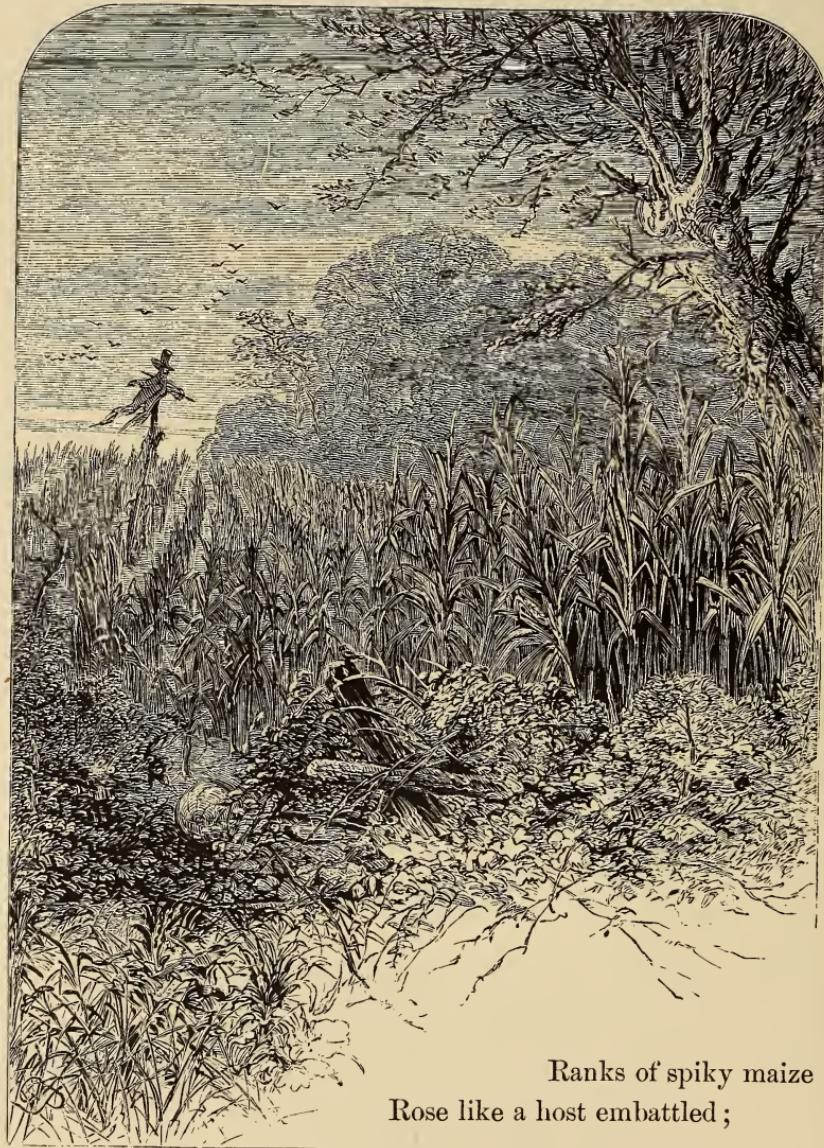
The low of ox, and shouts of men who fired  
The brushwood, or who tore the earth with ploughs.







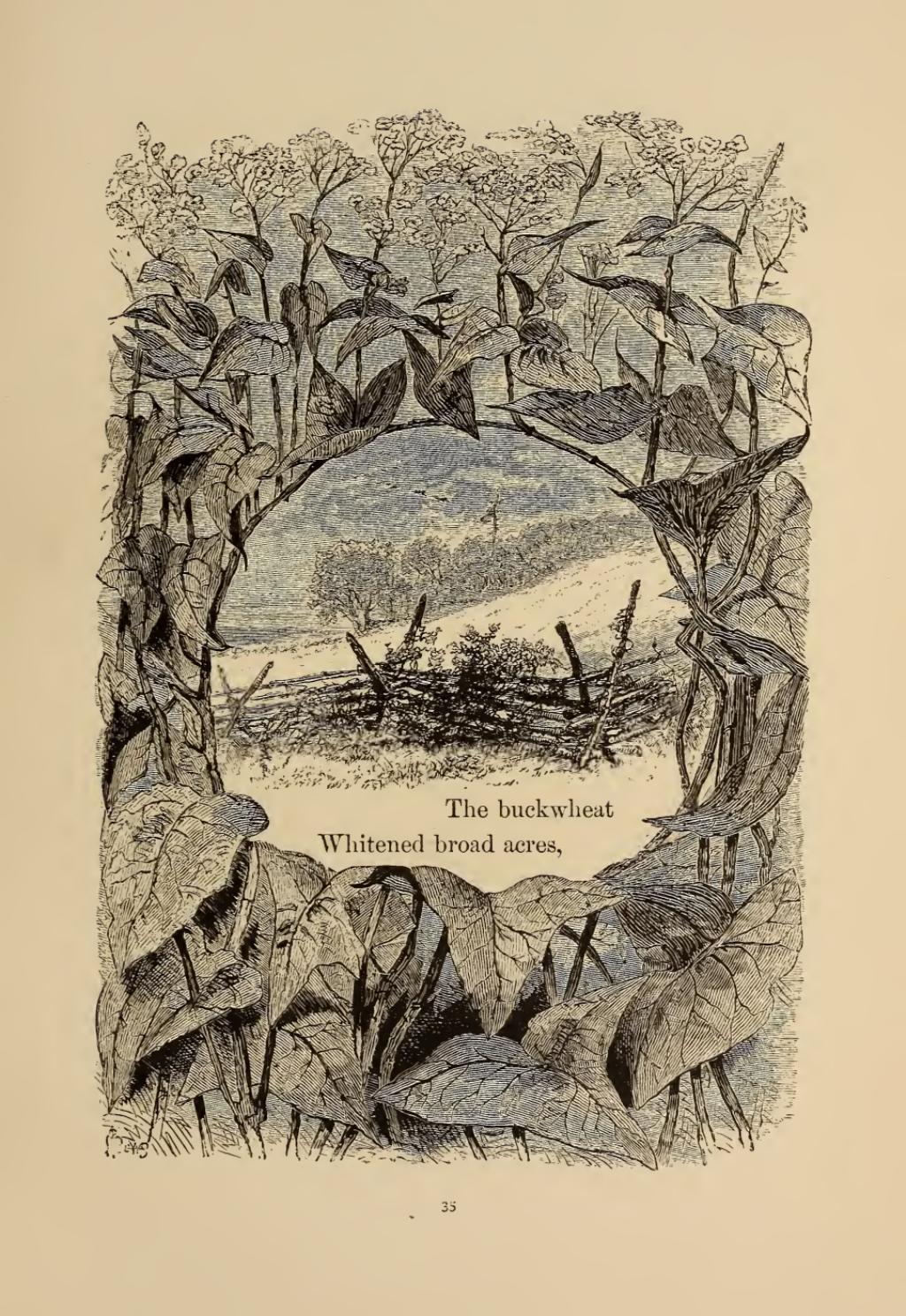
The grain sprang thick and tall, and hid in green  
The blackened hill-side ;



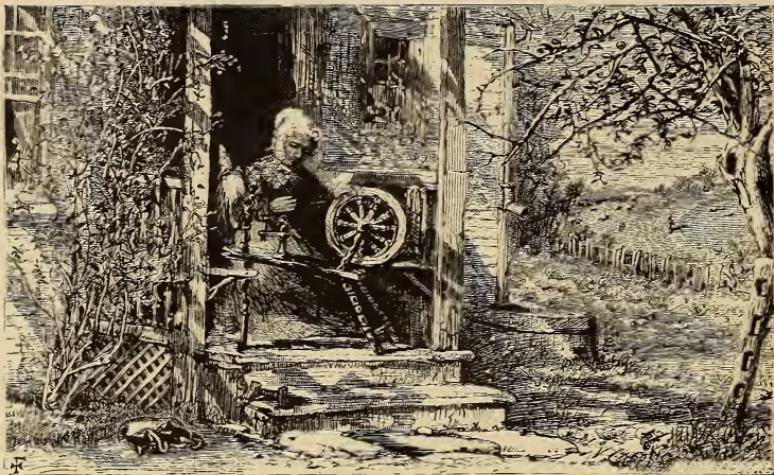
Ranks of spiky maize  
Rose like a host embattled;



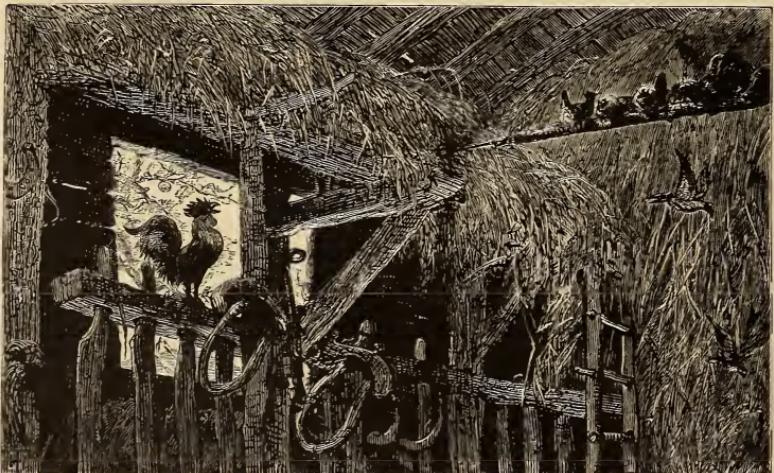




The buckwheat  
Whitened broad acres,



Sweetening with its flowers  
The August wind. White cottages were seen  
With rose-trees at the windows ; barns from which



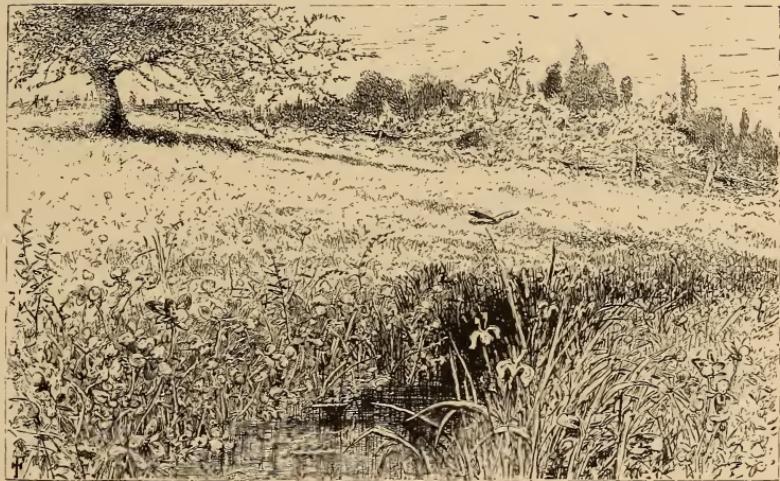
Came loud and shrill the crowing of the cock ;







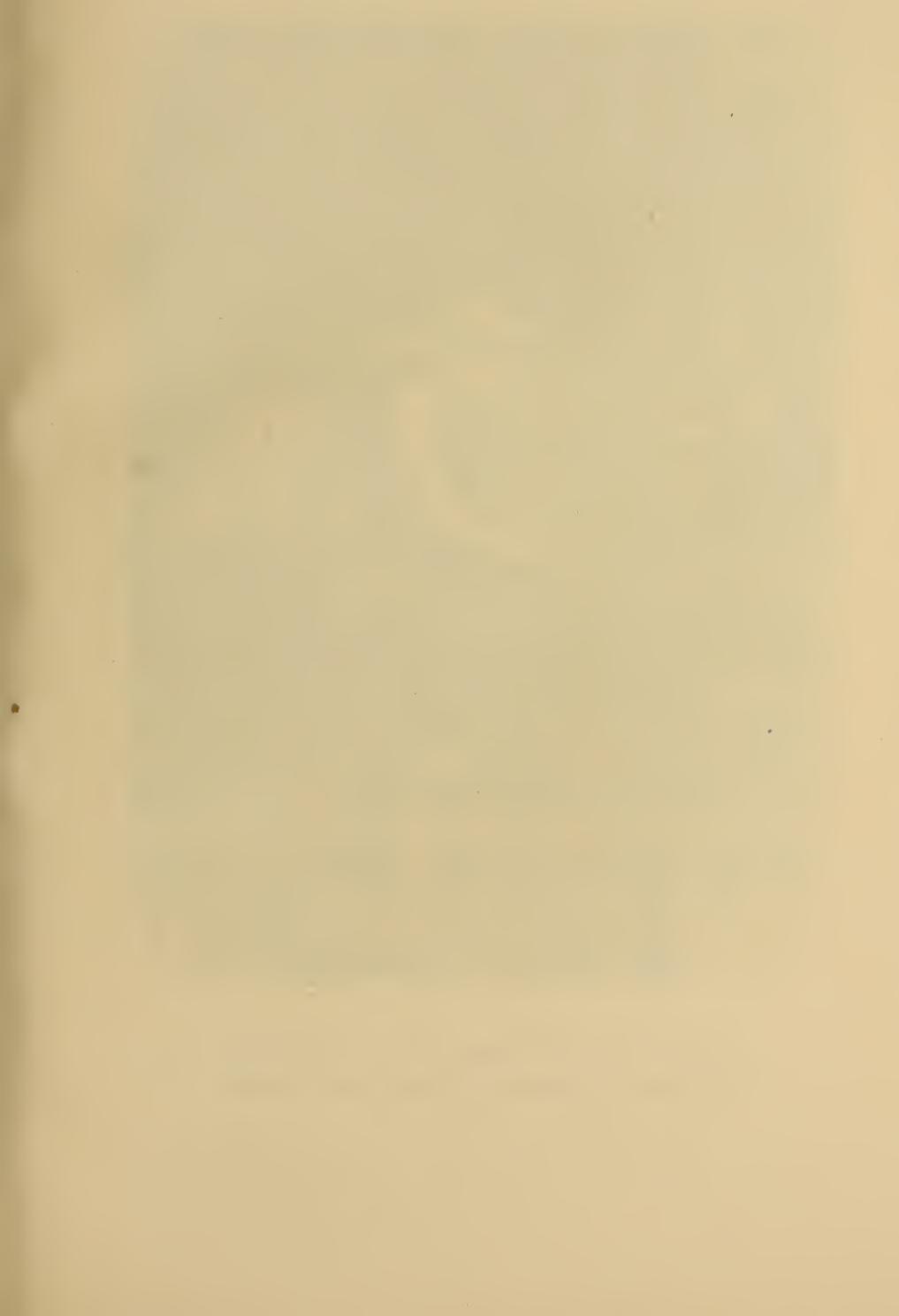
Pastures where rolled and neighed the lordly horse,  
And white flocks browsed and bleated. A rich turf



Of grasses brought from far o'ercrept thy bank,  
Spotted with the white clover.



Blue-eyed girls  
Brought pails, and dipped them in thy crystal pool;







And children, ruddy-cheeked and flaxen-haired,  
Gathered the glistening cowslip from thy edge.



Since then, what steps have trod thy border ! Hero  
On thy green bank, the woodman of the swamp  
Has laid his axe, the reaper of the hill  
His sickle, as they stooped to taste thy stream.







The sportsman, tired with wandering in the still  
September noon, has bathed his heated brow  
In thy cool current.



Shouting boys, let loose  
For a wild holiday, have quaintly shaped  
Into a cup the folded linden-leaf,  
And dipped thy sliding crystal.







From the wars  
Returning, the plumed soldier by thy side  
Has sat, and mused how pleasant 'twere to dwell  
In such a spot, and be as free as thou,  
And move for no man's bidding more. At eve,



When thou wert crimson with the crimson sky,  
Lovers have gazed upon thee, and have thought  
Their mingled lives should flow as peacefully

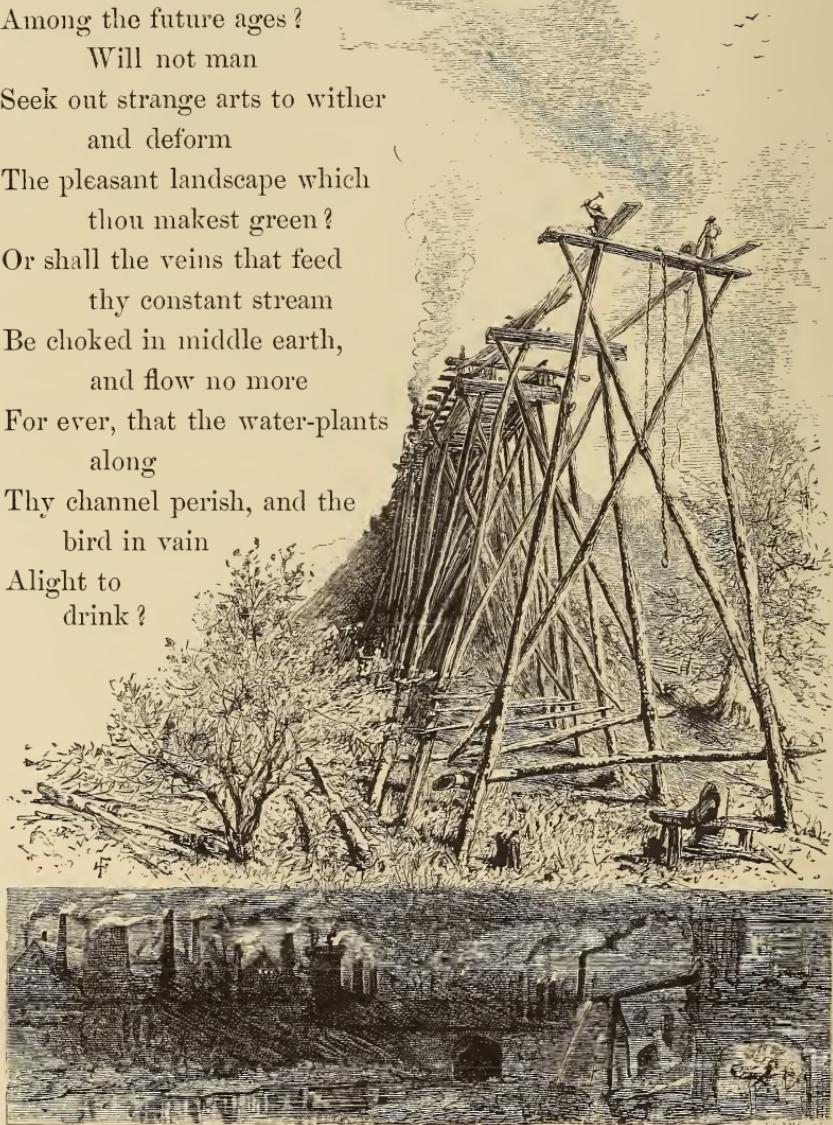






And brightly as thy waters. Here the sage,  
Gazing into thy self-replenished depth,  
Has seen eternal order circumscribe  
And bind the motions of eternal change,  
And from the gushing of thy simple fount  
Has reasoned to the mighty universe.

Is there no other change  
for thee, that lurks  
Among the future ages ?  
Will not man  
Seek out strange arts to wither  
and deform  
The pleasant landscape which  
thou makest green ?  
Or shall the veins that feed  
thy constant stream  
Be choked in middle earth,  
and flow no more  
For ever, that the water-plants  
along  
Thy channel perish, and the  
bird in vain  
Alight to  
drink ?

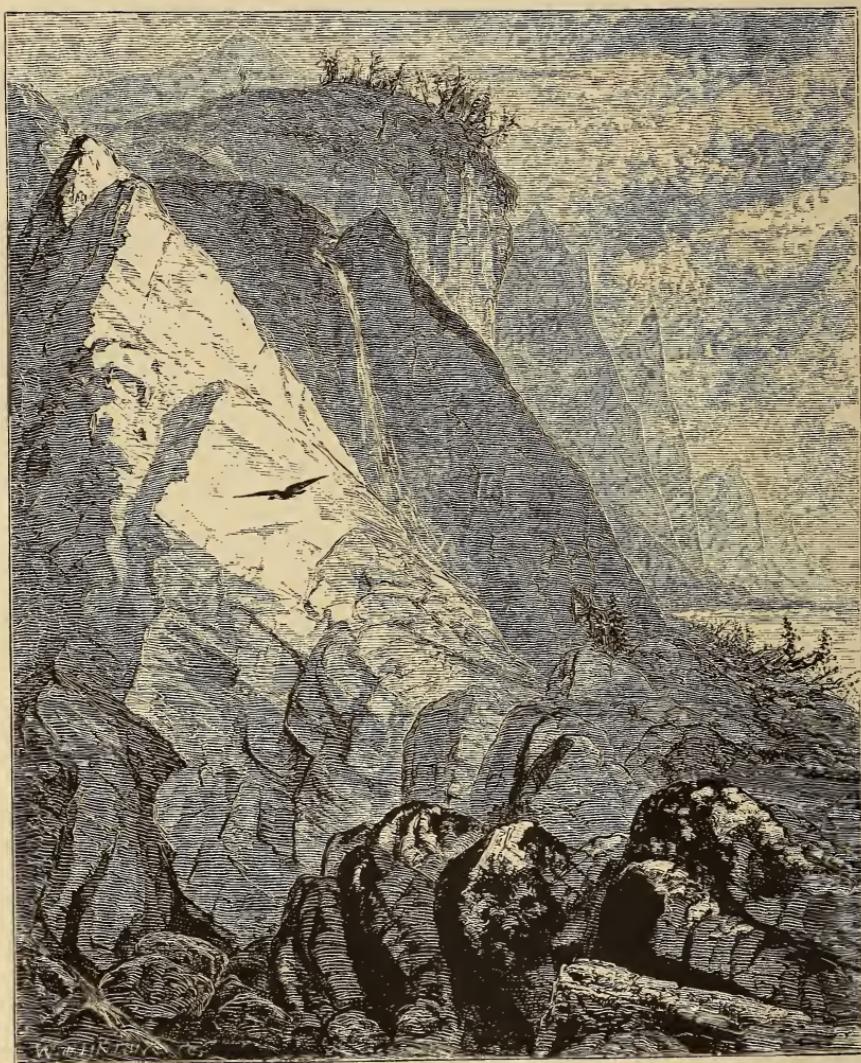








Haply shall these green hills  
Sink, with the lapse of years, into the gulf  
Of ocean-waters, and thy source be lost  
Amidst the bitter brine ? Or shall they rise,



Upheaved in broken cliffs and airy peaks,  
Haunts of the eagle and the snake, and thou  
Gush midway from the bare and barren steep ?











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